REMARKS

Claims 1-68 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 11, 20, 30, 39, 49, 58, 59, 62, 65, and 68 are independent claims. All claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on U.S. Patent No. 6,615,258 to Barry et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,691,244 to Kampe et al. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Regarding Rejections

While the Office Action points to the combination of Barry and Kampe to reject certain claims, the express claim limitations cannot be found in the combination. The rejections are therefore traversed.

All independent claims recite structures and functions with respect to a master node of a cluster of competing nodes. In particular, the claims require that:

1)   a client must connect to the master node;

2)   a message list associated with the client must be on the master node; and

3)   a message descriptive of a detected event must be stored in the message list on the master node.

Furthermore, the detected event must occur while performing tasks for the client on a plurality of nodes of the cluster. Those complete structure and functions are not suggested by Barry, either alone or in combination with Kampe.

First of all, as noted by the Office Action, Barry discusses a Web Server cluster (24). That cluster does not include the recited message list or task processing. Instead, the Office Action refers to the Order Entry (OE) server (39) and the Report Messenger (RM) server (32) of the MCI Intranet (30) for these limitations. These servers are separate and distinct from the Web Server cluster (24).

The Applicants are not claiming the mere detection and reporting of events. As acknowledged in the Background section of the application, these broad functions are in the prior art. The Applicants' claims address the prior art problem of reporting an event detected during

processing of a task on a processing node of a cluster to the client associated with that task. Neither Barry nor Kampe discuss that problem or suggest the claimed solution.

The Office Action cites FIG. 2, and column 7, lines 29-57 of Barry as teaching the claimed "connecting a client to a [master] node of the cluster." According to Barry, a load balancer (29) is disposed between the Web Server cluster (24) and the client (20). The load balancer (29) is separate and distinct from the cluster (24). It is not clear how the load balancer (29) operates, but presumably it attempts to evenly distribute Web Server tasks among the individual server nodes in the Web Server cluster (29). It appears then that all clients (20) connect to the load balancer and not to any particular node of the cluster (24).

Even if the Web Server cluster (24) includes a master node as discussed by Kampe, there is still no suggestion from Barry to connect the client (20) to that master node. It is the Applicants' understanding that the load balancer would still be required in the combination. If the Office disagrees, detailed reasoning to support that position is requested.

The Office Action next cites to column 18, lines 17-66 of Barry as teaching "associating a message list to the client on the master node" and "performing tasks for the client on a plurality of nodes of the cluster." That section of Barry, however, relates to the OE server (35), as shown in FIG. 7. As clearly shown in FIG. 2, the OE server (39) is separate and distinct from the Web Server cluster (24). Therefore, any structure in or function of the OE server is not a part of the claimed cluster operation. No similar discussion with respect to the Web Server cluster (24) is suggested by the Office Action.

The claims recite additional patentable features, both in the independent and dependent forms. As such, the patentability of the claims are not limited to the noted distinctions over the cited references.

In particular, it is noted that Claims 58 and 68 are drafted in means-plus-function format, which limits their scope under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 6, but were not examined as such. If the Office disagrees as to the scope of these claims, detailed reasoning is requested.

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For at least the above reasons, the Office Action fails to establish a prima facie obviousness rejection. Reconsideration of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that all claims are in condition for allowance, and it is respectfully requested that the application be passed to issue. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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